
Government of the District of Columbia



**Office of the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families
and Elders**

Testimony of
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New Communities/ Northwest One Redevelopment

Committee on Economic Development
Sharon Ambrose, Chairperson

5th Floor Council Chamber
Wednesday, November 16, 2005
The John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
10:00 a.m.

Good morning Chairperson Ambrose and members of the Committee on Economic Development. I am Brenda Donald Walker, the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders. I am pleased to testify before you today in support of the Northwest One Redevelopment Plan. I am here to explain the human capital component, which both makes this redevelopment project unique and innovative, but also is central to the success of the project.

The New Communities approach reflects our vision for the human capital elements of all future development. We know that sustainable redevelopment requires far more than investing in bricks and mortar. It requires investing in the people who comprise the community.

The human capital component of this project lays out the goals and objectives essential for residents to achieve self-reliance and an improved quality of life. It responds directly to the residents' needs and fuses mixed-income housing development with the creation of an integrated service delivery system to guarantee that all families and individuals have the tools they need to thrive in their New Community.

Over the past ten months, we have worked diligently with the NW1 residents to gather specific information on the community's challenges and assets. This public engagement process included small public meetings, town hall meetings, focus groups and one-on-one meetings with stakeholders. With the help of Urban Strategies, an organization with a demonstrated track record of successfully connecting social service support to the physical redevelopment of communities, we conducted an extensive neighborhood survey to gauge the needs and preferences of the families in the community, knocking on over 1000 doors, spending time with each family, and ultimately obtaining completed surveys from over 20% of the households in the area. This allowed us to have statistically significant data on which to build the human capital plan, and provided the foundation for a plan that would provide the support systems residents actually need.

What we found, is that:

- 90 percent of the households make less than \$30,000
- 60 percent are living at or below poverty.
- Over 40 percent are headed by single mothers
- 38 percent do not have a high school degree
- The area's unemployment rate is over 21 percent (compared to less than 8 percent District-wide)

- 33 percent are either retired or disabled.

From this information and from residents themselves we have determined that there are six critical areas for focused improvement:

1. Economic opportunity
2. Education and recreation
3. Safety and security
4. Physical and mental health
5. Senior programming
6. Community-based technology

Now that we have listened and learned from the community the needs of the families in the neighborhoods, we are moving forward to fine tune the implementation of the necessary human services. We have begun to examine all of our existing programs and services to determine what is already in place that supports the goals of the Human Capital Plan in order to quantify what other investments are needed to achieve tangible outcomes in the six priority areas.

We will use a case management delivery system to develop individual self-sufficiency plans tailored to the specific needs of each family to ensure they are

equipped with the tools and supports necessary to thrive and contribute to their new community.

We are pulling together the resources of the government across all areas to create thriving communities through integrated service delivery

We are working across agencies, across clusters and across the city with an emphasis on the six areas identified by the members of the community.

We know that people should not have to know or care whether it is up to the Department of Human Services or the Department of Employment Services to help them move from public assistance to work. People simply want seamless access to the services they need to be self-sufficient members of the families, neighborhoods, and communities of which they are a part.

Now that we know about the community and what residents want and need to be successful, we are ready to act. We appreciate your support thus far and look forward to continuing to work with the Council to make this important initiative a success.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have on the human capital component of the Northwest One Redevelopment Plan.